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Lights, Camera, Action: Participatory Video to Empower Rural Women and Youth

Humidtropics Capacity Development 2015 Activity Report and 2016 proposed planning

January 2016

Introduction

Successful agricultural research for development (AR4D) should go beyond generation of quantitative research findings, and ensure these findings feed into context-relevant development interventions. An understanding of the context in which the research takes place is therefore essential for AR4D, and ought to include all groups that make up the research context in the process: include their voices, opinions, needs and ideas and look for ways to communicate these to a variety of audiences. Based on the successful pilot PV workshop jointly conducted in 2014 by Humidtropics, CCAFS and CIAT with a group of young rural women and men from La Danta (Somotillo, Nicaragua), a rural community in one of Humidtropics' Field Sites in the Central America and the Caribbean (CAC) Flagship project, "Lights, Camera, Action: Participatory Video to Empower Rural Women and Youth" was implemented as a Capacity Development project in 2015. With cross-cutting linkages to inclusive gender, youth, and communication components, the project explores the potential of transformative processes stemming from learning experiences at community level.

What is Participatory Video?

Participatory Video (PV) is a participatory research tool that involves members of a community in creating their own video message. The community learns to use video technology, write their own story, interview leaders and neighbors, and tell their own story. The PV methodology collects indigenous knowledge on factors that impact the effectiveness of sustainable development interventions based on local needs. It is an ideal method for sharing ideas and learning, and through this, encouraging groups that are often marginalized to identify their own needs and implement their own forms of sustainable development.

Whether implemented as a standalone project or as a tool to support ongoing integrated agricultural research interventions, PV helps to identify important overarching development themes, including:

- Community Leadership and Participation
- Knowledge, Learning and Innovation
- Gender and Inter-Generational Dynamics
- Natural Resources and Income Generation

PV is simple to replicate, disseminate, and track. Therefore it can also serve as a versatile M&E tool throughout the various phases of research interventions, generating insights and feedback from specific target groups. This creates a strong sense of project ownership within the community and a more fertile ground for technology adoption and social change.

Exploring the potential of inclusive youth and gender components linked to innovation and transformation processes which stem from learning experiences at community level, PV provides a



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thorough understanding of the development challenges facing poor rural communities. This serves as a powerful contextual base to adequately adapt development strategies and policies to local needs, knowledge, and wants.

Context

The Learning Alliance initiative conducted in the Humidtropics Nicanorte Action Site provided an effective platform to explore the use of ICTs and participatory methodologies with rural youth and women, to develop a series of tools and products that can possibly be replicated in the rest of the Central America and the Caribbean Flagship (Haiti-Dominican Republic and Trifinio Action Sites), as well as Central Mekong, East and Central Africa Highlands, and West Africa Lowlands flagships.

Justification

The engagement of rural communities in ICTs, paying particular attention to women and youth, is a powerful channel to foster the leap from individual and collective learning to sustainable livelihood impacts through an integrated capacity development approach. Enhancing the participation of marginalized groups in policy-making debates, it provides a valuable resource to stimulate equitable and fair levels of consultation when it comes to the design of policies that affect rural populations.

PV has proven to be a promising cross-cutting initiative to explore the potential of inclusive youth and gender components and transformation processes stemming from learning experiences at community level. Important site-specific themes that surfaced during the process to strengthen ongoing research include community leadership (including leadership roles of young women in community initiatives), the value of knowledge and learning, natural resource management as a catalyst for development, and the role of rural youth in the future of agriculture, as perceived by themselves and by older generations.

The PV initiative showed great potential to develop an effective methodology that can be adapted to the various Action Sites across the Humidtropics Flagship projects on a global scale, generate a broad range of powerful training tools and audiovisual materials illustrating the qualitative side of statistics to enhance impact on decision-making processes, and empower rural communities to examine their livelihoods, share their stories and voice their opinions regarding their way of life, how this is connected to the way they manage their resources, and how this gives them the power to be their own agents of development and transformation.

Objectives

General objective

The general objective of this project was to generate a dynamic PV methodology that empowers young adults and women in rural communities to partake in learning experiences by sharing their perspectives on their livelihoods and natural resource management strategies.

Specific objectives

- To develop a PV methodology to collect indigenous knowledge on factors that impact the effectiveness of sustainable development strategies based on local needs, including the differentiation of these impacts by gender.

- To implement a pilot PV workshop in the Humidtropics Nicanorte Action Site to test the effectiveness of the proposed PV methodology in engaging rural women and youth in a process of analysis and response that stimulates innovative problem-solving at farm- and community-level.
- To generate an adaptable PV methodology and cross-cutting training tools to be used across Humidtropics Action Sites and beyond.

Contribution to IDOs

Developing a cross-cutting PV methodology has contributed to the Humidtropics Enabling IDOs, ensuring that elements of Innovation and Gender and Youth are effectively mainstreamed in the design and implementation of interventions across the Program's Action Areas and beyond. Contributions to the Gender and Youth IDO stem from empowering rural women and youth to engage in learning activities and voice their stories and opinions while they gained confidence in their abilities to acquire new skills and thought creatively in regards to innovative problem-solving. Meanwhile, the Innovation IDO has been strengthened by the proposed PV methodology as it created conditions for small farmers, women, and youth to gain confidence in their ability to succeed at new activities and improve existing local knowledge and practices.

Contributing to Enabling Development Outcomes

From this project it appeared that the cross-cutting nature of PV contributes to the achievement of development outcomes, by effectively mainstreaming elements of innovation and gender and youth empowerment in AR4D design and implementation.

Innovation is strengthened by creating conditions for smallholder farmers, women, and youth to gain confidence in their abilities to succeed at new activities and improve existing local knowledge and practices. At the same time, gender and youth empowerment occurs by engaging marginalized groups in learning activities and encouraging them to voice their stories and opinions. This provides a non-threatening mechanism that improves gender and inter-generational relationships.

Achievements in 2015

1. **Participatory Video Methodology Facilitator's Manual developed** (January – March 2015)
 - A PV methodology Facilitator's Manual was developed by adapting the existing PV methodology and accompanying qualitative data collection tools to a user-friendly format, with the aim to be used by a wide audience (such as other researchers, NGO's, local actors and community leaders and/or members). The Manual was illustrated, designed, and translated into Spanish for future use by local actors in Nicaragua.
2. **PV Methodology Facilitator's Manual validation workshop conducted** (April – May 2015)
 - A PV workshop was jointly planned and conducted by Humidtropics, CCAFS and CIAT from May 04 – 15 2015, using the PV Methodology Facilitator's Manual as a guide, with the purpose of validating design and content effectiveness. The workshop was conducted with a

group of 12 young women (aged between 18 and 27 years old) from Estelí, Nicaragua, with collaboration from local partner Fundación Entre Mujeres (FEM). Based on observations made during the workshop, the Manual was corrected and improved regarding language, style, and facilitation approach, after which a final version was produced. Furthermore, some elements that appeared to be missing or needed further explanation were added, as well as some guiding graphs and frameworks.

3. **PV Methodology Facilitator's Manual adapted into blended learning format** (August – November 2015)
 - A consultant was hired to adapt the PV Methodology Facilitator's Manual into an interactive virtual e-course, to facilitate project dissemination and replication in other sites. The course is developed over different modules, starting off with an introduction and workshop preparations. After this, each module relates to a specific day of the workshop. Special attention has been given to the easy understanding of the course, the cultural applicability and that the course does not necessarily need to be taken over the internet, but can also be downloaded and/or burnt onto cd's, so as to include those in communities not connected to the internet.
4. **Overarching Development Theme Guide developed** (August-September 2015)
 - Overarching development themes to be extracted from the qualitative analysis of PV workshop results were defined and a guideline developed. Themes include participation, learning and innovation, gender and inter-generational dynamics, and natural resources and income generation, grouped under two main categories: identifying challenges for sustainable livelihoods and empowerment of marginalized groups. The overarching development themes also serve as a guide to focus the PV dissemination strategies and to be able to link and communicate the relevant information to research teams working on these specific themes.
5. **Project Monitoring & Evaluation tools developed** (September – October 2015)
 - With support from the Humidtropics CAC Flagship M&E officer, a set of M&E tools were developed to measure workshop effectiveness, determine the project's value proposition, provide guidelines for external facilitation, and define a clear impact pathway. This M&E framework will be developed into a more official tool to be used within PV projects in agricultural research for development.
6. **Project promotional materials developed** (September 2015)
 - A consultant was hired to create a whiteboard animation video, and a promotional 2-pager was developed, to inform other Flagships and actors about the PV project proposal, sharing key information including: introducing PV as a participatory action research tool; linking PV to Enabling program outcomes; communicating PV's potential contributions in relation to community leadership and participation, knowledge, learning and innovation, gender and

- inter-generational dynamics, and natural resources and income generation; general considerations regarding timeline, equipment, and budget needs; and contact information.
- Project promotional materials were disseminated according to an established communication strategy on November 10, 2015, related to the UN declared World Science Day for Peace and Development. After promotion of the video, a total amount of 70 views was reached, most of which in Colombia and Nicaragua. The video was shared three times. The accompanying blog was read many times (stats are still pending), and was cross posted on CCAFS and Humidtropics. A request for cross post by the PV organization Insightshare is currently being taken into account.

Potential 2016 work plan

Depending on resource availability, a possible 2016 work plan for the continuation of the project would revolve around systematization, follow-up and scaling activities, including:

- Developing a dissemination strategy for project promotional materials (including printouts of the PV 2-pager and circulation of the whiteboard animation video) to propose replicating the project in Humidtropics' Africa and Asia Flagships, either through the CRP itself or through partner organizations. Through these promotional materials, CIAT/CCAFS/Humidtropics will intend to place itself as a key player using Participatory Video in AR4D.
- Develop a booklet or other publication format systematizing the full PV project experience in Nicaragua, starting with the pilot workshop conducted in Somotillo, comparing and contrasting the experience in Estelí, and concluding with an analysis of the project's potential to be applied in other areas of the world under various contexts.
- Develop a participatory web platform where PV workshop participants from different communities (or even different countries) can interact and share experiences and ideas. This will give way to gain insight into the various ways the PV project's initial impacts linked to identifying challenges and community empowerment can be given continuity through follow-up interventions facilitated by the CRPs and/or local organizations. Furthermore can it be measured whether peer collaboration (can the use of web platforms and ICT's give way for youth and rural women empowerment on the long-term?). The idea, on the long term, is to train local organizations to manage the participatory web platform as a tool to gain insights that support the design, implementation, and follow-up of their activities (as a separate, more leadership-oriented role than that of individual community members) and to organize themselves as a cross-cutting community to prepare their statements and voices and build a stronger 'bridge' to reach policy and decision makers at local, national and international level
- Complement existing PV workshop methodology with the design of a follow-up Video Editing and Dissemination Workshop. This will then go into greater detail regarding the editing process (as requested by workshop participants in Estelí) and introducing the subject of designing a dissemination strategy as a way to reach specific audiences for various purposes, serving as a building block towards a more concrete understanding on how to reach and influence decision-makers.

- Publication of two academic papers: one on the framework of using PV for two way communication in AR4D (almost finished) and one paper on the use of PV to define young rural feminism in Nicaragua.

Opportunities for new cross-cutting activities

Depending on resource availability, an opportunity for new cross-cutting activities lies in the application of the PV methodology to explore the subject of young rural feminism in Nicaragua, one of the key concepts which PV workshop participants from Estelí mentioned as a guiding principle of local organizations' activities in the territory.

- *"Participatory Video to Understand Young Rural Feminism in Nicaragua"* would engage young rural women in the PV process, ensuring a thematic focus on rural feminism to continue empowerment and capacity building, while exploring emerging trends surrounding rural feminism in the region. Objectives include defining the traditional concept of feminism under which territorial organizations are currently working in the region, identifying the factors that have given rise to the concept of rural feminism, and identifying how the contemporary challenges faced by younger generations of rural women are impacting rural feminism. This would then be linked to the existing challenges of farming under a changing climate, resulting into changing social and cultural roles. Finally, this provides an opportunity to explore how local territorial organizations respond to the issues facing young rural women specifically, identify existing gaps, and providing recommendations to bridge these gaps.
- Aside from contributing to the work being carried out in rural areas of Nicaragua regarding gender equality, the use of the PV methodology serves to catalyze women's empowerment, simultaneously promoting the adoption of transformational thinking at both organizational and community levels while providing guidelines to target this and ensure continuity through innovative action.
- Another opportunity for new cross-cutting activities involves engaging organizations with the PV methodology, with the purpose of exploring organization empowerment, leadership, and innovation trends identified through the application of the PV method's transformative thinking approach.

Input and involvement from regional projects

- Depending on available resources, replicating the experiences proposed for Nicaragua and applying them in Humidtropics' Africa and Asia Flagship projects is an opportunity to assess, compare, and contrast effectiveness in the various contexts where both Humidtropics and CCAFS operate, providing valuable insights that can support future project design, implementation, and follow-up.
- Furthermore, interest in the use of the tool and the methodology has been shown by the CIAT soils team (through Juliet Braslow), the GeoCitizen Science approach (led by Anton Eitzinger), the 5Q approach (led by Anton Eitzinger and Manon Koningstein) and the Ecosystem Services team at CIAT (led by Marcela Quintero and Gisella Cruz-Garcia). However, due to current budget constraints, a certain uncertainty along these lines is inevitable.



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Summary of 2015 outputs

ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
Participatory Video Methodology Facilitator's Manual developed	1. Participatory Video Methodology 2. PV Methodology Facilitator's Manual
PV Methodology Facilitator's Manual validation workshop conducted (includes adaptation of manual as one of the workshop's results)	3. PV Methodology Facilitator's Manual validation workshop report 4. <u>Final participatory video elaborated by PV workshop participants in Estelí</u>
PV Methodology Facilitator's Manual adapted into blended learning format	5. PV Methodology Facilitator's Training E-course
Overarching Development Theme Guide developed	6. Overarching Development Themes
Project Monitoring & Evaluation tools developed	7. PV Monitoring & Evaluation Matrix
Project promotional materials (2-pager and whiteboard animation video) developed	8. PV Project promotional 2-pager 9. <u>PV Project promotional whiteboard animation video</u>